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Is there a bias towards elected actors in media coverage of policy-making in European metropolitan areas?

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Abstract

Metropolitan areas are a typical and increasingly discussed example for fragmented governance lacking clear accountability structures. While most of the literature has focused on the legitimacy of institutions and actors so far, we add a communicational dimension to democratic accountability. In this regard we argue that public accountability/ or accountability through the mass media has become a democratic standard that can be measured/ analyzed. Comparing two types of metropolitan governance in four countries, we test a theoretical and an empirical hypothesis regarding media's ability to be a forum for public accountability. First, we argue that the media points out who is responsible for policy decisions in a way that mirrors governance structures. By pointing out who is responsible for policy making processes, public accountability reduces the complexity of network governance and actors can be held accountable. Second, however, we expect that the media are biased in focusing more on elected actors because due to their institutional/ political accountability they are more visible and thus easier to be held accountable. Analysing newspaper content data, we come to a mixed conclusion. While both elected and non-elected policy-actors are visible in the media, elected actors are more often attributed with responsibility and blamed than they are actually responsible. Unelected actors are not only outside of the chain of delegation in governance structures, they are also less in the focus of public control. Hence, although non-elected actors are less in the focus of public control, the mass media compensate their institutional lack of accountability by holding them accountable in public.

1. Introduction¹: *metropolitan governance and the question of democracy*

Across the world, the twin forces of globalisation and urbanisation have led to the emergence of urban regions as functionally integrated territorial systems of economic production and social reproduction. These metropolitan areas have become the dominant form of human settlement, not only in OECD countries, but increasingly so in less developed countries (Hoffmann-Martinot and Sellers, 2005). But they not only constitute the spatial environment for an increasing majority of the world's citizens. More and more, they also become relevant spaces for politics and policies. Metropolitan areas usually are the economic powerhouses of national economies. They are privileged business locations because they provide the assets that are critical to the accumulation of wealth in the knowledge-based economy: a high-skilled workforce, transport and communication connections to the rest of the world, as well as clusters of competence in research and development. Metropolitan areas are the gateways to the world economy and, as such, crucial for globalised capitalism. They are the territorial scale at which the "dirty work of globalization (and neoliberalization) is done" (Keil, 2000), i.e. where public policies are defined and implemented in order to ensure the competitiveness of national economies at a global level. Among these, services in the field of transportation are important, as they secure connectivity and accessibility of a metropolitan area, as well as activities in the field of economic development, as they help to attract new businesses to the area and/or strengthen existing economic clusters. It is against this background that some scholars argue that a reterritorialisation of state spaces at the scale of the metropolitan area is taking place (most prominently Brenner, 2004). In response to pressures stemming from advanced global capitalism, they argue, state authorities across the world have developed strategies aimed at increasing governance capacity at the level of metropolitan areas (Brenner, 1999), (Brenner, 2003, Scott, 2001). The strengthening of metropolitan governance thus appears as a very significant example for processes of "downwards" denationalization.

However, the strengthening of metropolitan governance is not a simple task. The basic problem is that metropolitan areas are generally very fragmented spaces. Metropolitan areas are cities that have grown by spatial extension, independently from institutional boundaries. Today's metropolitan areas span over large numbers of local jurisdictions or other subnational government territories;

¹ This paper is based on research conducted in the project "Cleavages, governance and the media in European metropolitan areas", funded by the Swiss National Fund in the NCCR Democracy framework. The authors acknowledge research assistance by Christopher Goodman, Christian Schalch, Su Yun Woo, Nina Astfalck and Nadja Hauser in the coding of the media content data.

sometimes they even stretch across the boundaries of national states. They are characterised by “geopolitical” (Zeigler and Brunn, 1980) and “governmental” (Dente, 1990) fragmentation that poses serious challenges to effective policy-making. In fact, the question of the territorial organisation of metropolitan areas has sparked a long running debate in urban social science (see Savitch and Vogel, 2009, Kübler, 2012). During much of the 20th century, this debate has been characterised by a fierce dispute between the so-called metropolitan reform tradition and the public choice approach about the pros and cons of institutional consolidation (Ostrom, 1972, Lefèvre, 1998), (Lowery, 1999), i.e. the creation of strong metropolitan governments versus the promotion of undistorted competition between autonomous localities. Since the 1990s however, researchers have increasingly emphasised the role of policy networks in policy-making at the metropolitan scale, and they have thus discovered a “new regionalism” (Savitch and Vogel, 2000, Frisken and Norris, 2001). As it turned out, hierarchical decision-making by governmental institutions is not the only way to ensure area-wide coordination in metropolitan policy-making. Instead, many metropolitan areas across the world heavily rely on non-hierarchical forms of coordination and cooperation, where political actors act on the basis of agreements reached by negotiation. This observation echoes work on multi-level governance in Europe (see Hooghe and Marks, 2003) showing that negotiation in joint-decision systems (Scharpf, 1997) is paramount to coherent policy-making between a variety of interdependent governmental and non-governmental policy actors across different state levels. This means that most metropolitan areas in the world have been able to strengthen their area-wide governing capacity even though full-fledged “metropolitan governments” (Sharpe, 1995) - advocated by the metropolitan reform tradition or the “old regionalism” approach - will remain a distant dream. With respect to the effectiveness and quality of public services at the metropolitan-level new regionalism, understood as area-wide policy-coordination flowing from complex network governance, has been shown to provide a valid alternative for area-wide policy-making in a context of geopolitical fragmentation (see Kübler, 2005).

Governance capacity in metropolitan areas can thus be seen to rest on different strategies. Some metropolitan areas simply rely on largely self-regulated competition between autonomous localities - this is the pure public choice solution (see Tiebout, 1956) and has been followed as an explicit strategy only in a very limited number of examples (Frey and Eichenberger, 2001). Others have reformed the existing territorial institutions either via municipal amalgamation or via the creation of new metropolitan scale of government: an area-wide general purpose institution with strong powers, resources and electoral representation. There are quite a few empirical examples of such metropolitan governments, such as *Portland Metro* and the *Twin Cities* in the USA, the French *communautés urbaines*, the *Greater London Authority* in England, as well as the *Regionalverbände*

Stuttgart and Hanover in Germany. Scholars have argued that, in cases where the spatial extension of the metropolitan areas coincided more or less with the boundaries of sub-national state-levels above the municipalities, these existing institutions have become functional equivalents to a metropolitan government, as is the case of the *Comunidad Autónoma* in the Madrid metropolitan area, or of the *Kanton* in the Zurich metropolitan area (Jouve, 2003). Finally, the third - new regionalist - approach to the challenges of area-wide policy-making has consisted in strengthening arenas of intergovernmental coordination and in widening the scope of actors associated in policy-making. Empirically, the new regionalist approach is clearly the most widely followed. Given the widespread resistance to consolidationist reforms (Lefèvre, 2001), the new regionalist approach often appeared as a pragmatic solution to the challenges of metropolitan policy-making in spite of inabilities of institutional reforms.

In terms of their empirical relevance, the model of metropolitan government, as well as the new regionalist model, are the two main answers how policy-making in metropolitan areas has adapted to functional regionalization. The contrast between these two models echoes the distinction between traditional modes of government and new forms of network-based interactive governance (Klijn, 2008), or, to take up the well-known distinction by Hooghe and Marks (2003): between type I and type II governance. And it makes clear that metropolitan policy-making represents a promising example for studying the differences between these two types of governance, as well as possible implications of new forms of network governance (or: type II governance). This is exactly what this paper is about. Drawing on eight metropolitan areas in four countries - in each country, one metropolitan area with a metropolitan government was chosen as well as a metropolitan area that follows a new regionalist approach- we examine the democratic impact of new modes of governance. More precisely, the goal is to analyse to what extent public accountability of metropolitan policy-making as reflected in media coverage is related to the differences in the underlying models (metropolitan government versus new regionalism). We proceed in four steps. Section 2 develops the analytical perspective and lays out the main research question and hypotheses. Section 3 gives an overview of research design and data. Section 4 reports results on the involvement of different types of actors in metropolitan policy-making, their visibility the media reports, as well as the public attribution of responsibility to them.

2. Beyond the institutional perspective: the role of the media in new regionalism

As other forms of network governance in complex environments (Papadopoulos, 2003) new regionalism is often condemned as problematic with respect to democratic accountability. New

regionalism indeed relies on governance networks that involve non-elected actors in decision-making, whose democratic accountability is not evident, most notably for the electorate. It is via their public visibility that policy actors' responsibility can be clarified and identified by the electorate (cf. Powell and Whitten 1993). From the perspective of the electorate, elections are peaks of public visibility of policy actors who stand for (re)elections. Elections thus are institutional features which are likely to affect the public visibility of responsibility

This is the reason why, similar to work on other instances of network governance, research on the democratic quality of new regionalism has mainly focused on institutional aspects of democratic accountability, most notably the role of democratically elected representatives in policy-making at the metropolitan level. This perspective rests on the argument that the democratic quality of network governance depends on its 'anchorage' in representative institutions and democratic practice (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005). Results of research in this vein suggests that new regionalism is wrought with democratic deficits. Examining institutional mechanisms of democratic control over metropolitan policy-making Kübler and Schwab (2007) have shown that, while new regionalism increases inclusiveness of metropolitan policy-making by involving civil society actors, it results in blurring democratic accountability as policy responsibility is diluted among a large variety of policy-actors not all of whom are electorally accountable. When area-wide governance relies on policy networks, democratically elected local councillors lose grip, and input-legitimacy is reduced (Plüss, 2013). A historical study focusing on the change of mechanisms of institutionalised democratic control has shown that functional cooperation in metropolitan policy-making was often paralleled by a retreat of electoral (and/or direct democratic) politics to the benefit of de-politicised technocratism (Koch, 2013). The main problem with new regionalism, as it seems, resides in that it relativises the role of democratically elected actors as decision-making increasingly involves non-elected actors.

2.1 The information function: public visibility and public attribution of responsibility

Examining the institutional democratic anchorage of new regionalist arrangements is clearly a convincing way of assessing their democratic quality. However, the focus on democratic institutions somewhat overlooks the fact that electoral accountability not only depends on institutional procedures. Indeed, democratic accountability not only depends on the existence of institutional procedures of citizen control by which voters can hold decision-makers accountable - renew their mandate or throw them out of office. Democratic accountability is also conditional to voters' ability to express satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with policy performance, identify decision-makers and

attribute responsibility for policy success or failure to political actors. Hence, democratic accountability is construed in processes of communication that help citizens form their opinion about policy performance and connect their appreciation of those whom they consider responsible. In mass democracies, these communication processes are not of an immediate and interindividual nature, but are mediated primarily by the mass media. Citizens can hold decision-makers accountable for their actions only when mass media provide information about policy decisions and their outcomes. Citizens' perceptions of the political process, their evaluation of policy performance, their appreciation of parties and elected representatives are formed within processes of public debate. Thus, besides the institutional dimension, there is also a "communicational dimension" of democratic accountability, relating to the public sphere as one of the pillars for democratic legitimacy (see Habermas 1992).

According to Bovens "[a]ccountability is a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences" (2007: 450). In this regard, the relationship between representatives and the electorate is such a communicational relationship. But because representatives cannot directly communicate to the electorate, the mass media are the forum provided to the public of citizens where candidates dialogue with the electorate. However, this not only happens in the run-up of elections, but also between them. While elections are held on a regular basis (e.g. every four years), communication on policy performance and/or responsibility of decision makers is not limited to any particular period. Although there might be peaks of communicational activity at the time of elections, the media can and do inform on policy failures or successes continuously and independently of elections. Even though such information is politically relevant only in relation to some more or less distant moments of electoral control, the media are largely independent from electoral cycles and can thereby play the role of holding decision-makers accountable for their acts in periods between elections. Moreover, accountability of decision-makers not only means that they are assessed by the citizens via elections, but they are also evaluated against norms of conduct or standards defined by legal, administrative or professional forums (Bovens, 2007: 456); Romzek and Dubnick 1987: 230). In the media any actor of public interest can be held accountable with regard to a broad range of standards, triggering sanctions by the relevant forum - or influencing actor behaviour in anticipation of these sanctions. Decision-makers, be they elected politicians or appointed officials, can be held accountable for the violation of legal norms, malpractice or incompetence - independently from elections. The media contribute to such legal, administrative or professional accountability of decision-makers by revealing violations of norms to a wider audience (e.g. through investigative journalism). They "serve as citizens' eyes and ears to

survey the political scene and the performance of politicians”, as well as to “act as a public watchdog that barks loudly when it encounters misbehaviour, corruption, and abuses of power in the halls of government” (Graber, 2003: 143). The unwritten laws of political culture can force decision-makers to resign following ‘public pressure’ - even long before a violation of norms or standards has been legally established. It is clear that the media do not have formal sanctioning power on political actors. But they have the ability to “name and shame” them, i.e. make them visible to the public of citizens and enable the formation of a public opinion about who is responsible for what which will, eventually, lead to sanctions. We can therefore argue that the media take up a role of an autonomous “accountability forum” (Bovens, 2007) that is increasingly independent from electoral processes.

This is potentially good news for democratic accountability in complex network governance advocated by new regionalism. Indeed, it means that the media provide an additional - communicational - channel by which public accountability of governance networks can be ensured beyond their “democratic anchorage” in mechanisms of electoral control (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005). From a normative perspective, we can argue that the media have an information function, i.e. to inform the public adequately about what is going on in (metropolitan) politics and policy-making (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990). This suggests that the media and the way they report metropolitan policy news generally reflects the relevance of respective policy actors.² If the public is interested in knowing who is in charge of metropolitan policy-making and who is responsible for policy success and failure, media reporting will be driven by the quest to provide the audience with an accurate picture of the policy-making reality, and therefore to adequately cover those actors who have effective policy-relevance. The media will make those actors visible to the public, provide the information necessary to evaluate their performance, and thereby make them accountable to the electorate. Given the often complex nature of governance networks, this will be no simple task. But provided with adequate means, the media will eventually fulfil its democratic function to provide the public with information about who is responsible for what, irrespective of electoral status. Thanks to the media, policy relevant actors in governance networks can be identified and held accountable by the public - independently from their anchorage in democratic institutions and practice. In other words: there is no democratic deficit of governance networks, as long as the media play their role appropriately.

² Based on the theory of Niklas Luhmann, we consider the theoretical model of the public sphere or more generally the mass media to be a mirror of society (Spiegelmodell der Öffentlichkeit). See also Gerhards 1998: p. 269.

2.2 Media bias: commercial pressure and news selection

However, this is arguably quite a normative perspective about the role of the media in processes of political communication. Far from being neutral reporters of reality, the media interfere with the political content they communicate according to their own preferences and (commercial) interests. As Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) have argued, the media are not simply a mediating or intermediary agent whose function is to bridge the relation between a communicator and an audience as a substitute for interpersonal exchange. The term “the media” is misleading as it suggests the existence of a homogenous and monolithic bloc. In reality, the media is a system composed of a heterogenous multiplicity of competing actors who have their own preferences and interests. The media thereby add a specific bias to the information they process and to the political content they communicate (see Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999: 250-253).

Given limited resources, mass media are highly selective in the events they report. Only ‘newsworthy’ events are selected, according to ‘news value’ criteria (e.g. proximity, conflict, drama, personalization), determined by journalists’ worldviews, media production routines, but increasingly so by the commercial logic of the media industry. Media products sell well when they live up to the expectations of the audience, i.e. when they report about events that the audience finds ‘interesting’. With respect to politics, journalists can therefore be expected to have an attention bias towards elected decision-makers in comparison to appointed officials or non-elected policy-actors. Elections are institutionalised moments of power struggles and thus of public attention. Individuals standing up for election are therefore of higher news value to journalists than appointed or non-elected decision-makers. As a consequence, this means that elected actors are likely to receive more media attention than non-elected actors. Moreover, as media seek commercial success, i.e. to maximise audience share, media actors can be inclined to “exaggerate their control functions and focus excessively on the negative aspects of politics” (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999: 252) and blame elected actors for policy failures even when the responsibility of these elected actors is unclear.

Hence, we can hypothesise that media reporting about metropolitan policy-making will be biased in specific ways. Assuming an attention bias of the media towards elected actors, who are seen as more newsworthy than non-elected ones, we can expect that non-elected actors will be less often subject of media coverage on metropolitan policy-making, even when the institutional set up assigns them a crucial role. In addition, assuming that problems and scandals are considered more newsworthy than solutions and rule-conform behaviour, we can expect that negativism will prevail in media coverage on metropolitan policy-making, i.e. that actors are more often blamed for failures, rather than praised for success.

The media bias hypothesis therefore suggests a more tainted picture of democratic accountability of network governance in new regionalism. Not only does it mean that, due to media bias, media reports on metropolitan policy-making will be far from an accurate portrait of the actors involved, or of their responsibilities and merits. It also links the bias in this picture to the formal institutional arrangements, and notably the democratic anchorage of policy actors. The attention bias towards elected actors will make non-elected policy actors even less visible, and reduce the public's ability to hold them accountable for their acts. If the media bias assumptions are correct, the media will be far from compensating institutional democratic deficits of governance networks. Very much to the contrary: the institutional uncoupling of representative arenas from policy-making are reinforced through the communicational dimension of democratic accountability..

3. Research Design and Data

In this paper, we set out to explore the public accountability of elected and non-elected actors in metropolitan governance, by focusing on media reporting about metropolitan policy-making. The main objective is to establish whether media reporting - and hence the communicational dimension of democratic accountability - differs according to the institutional set up of metropolitan policy-making, i.e. according to the mix of elected or non-elected actors involved . More precisely, we systematically compare the involvement of different types of policy actors in metropolitan policy-making, their visibility in media reports, as well as the public attribution of responsibility they experience. The analysis is based on data on involvement of actors stemming from decision-analysis, as well as on content data of newspaper reporting on metropolitan policy-making in the fields of public transport and economic promotion. This section briefly presents the logic of case selection and describes the research design and the nature of the data collected.

3.1 Case selection

In terms of case selection, we decided to look at Switzerland, Germany, UK and France, in order to take into account potential differences between media systems as pointed out by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Switzerland and Germany represent the democratic corporatist model, UK the liberal, and France the polarized pluralist model. Hallin and Mancini (2004) describe the different degrees of commercialism in the three systems that might influence the reporting style. We therefore selected the mentioned four countries in order to control for media system effects as a potential intervening variable.

With respect to the institutional set up of governance networks in metropolitan policy-making, we selected two large metropolitan areas in each of the four countries. The logic of case selection was to

maximise variance on the independent variable, i.e. the mix between elected and non-elected policy actors involved in area wide governance. In each country, one metropolitan area with fully-fledged democratic institutions (metropolitan governments) was chosen, and one metropolitan area where area-wide governance primarily relies on governance networks (new regionalism). Zürich, Stuttgart, London and Lyon are cases with a metropolitan government, whereas new regionalism is predominant in area-wide policy-making in Bern, Berlin, Birmingham and Paris.

While this institutional distinction allowed an informed *ex ante* guess about the institutional variance across the metropolitan areas under scrutiny, two policy fields were selected for the empirical analysis: public transport and economy promotion. Both of them are crucial to the development of metropolitan areas. Public transport is a key factor in the urban regional development to boost local economy in the competition of European territories (Brenner 2003). Further, public transport is a rather traditional policy field in the growth of urban regions, whereas economy promotion is a rather recent field of metropolitan policy-making and relates to the global competition of regional markets.

3.2 Data sources: case studies and media content data

To compare the involvement of actors in actual policy-making processes with their appearance in the media (visibility and attribution of accountability), we use two types of data.

First, in-depth case studies of decision-making processes relevant to the two policy fields (public transport and economic promotion) under scrutiny were conducted in each metropolitan area, in order to identify the mix of actors involved in metropolitan policy-making. Similar to Maggetti (2009), the Actor-Process-Event-Scheme (APES) was used to analyse the involvement of actors in the policy-making processes under scrutiny. The software systematizes information on events and their participating actors on a time scale. Public documents, newspapers and websites were searched to identify decision events within specific policy processes as well as participating actors. The product of each case study is an APES figure, on the basis of which participation of every actor or actor group in decision-making processes can be computed and compared across cases. In the subsequent analysis, we use these figures to measure the involvement of different types of policy actors in decision-making processes in the two policy-fields under scrutiny. (A list of the analysed decision-processes can be found in the appendix. For a description of the procedure, as well as detailed case study results, see Christmann (2012).)

Second, our analysis of media reporting uses content data from newspapers. For each metropolitan area, three relevant newspapers were selected, based on circulation figures numbers and local importance (the exception is Lyon, where only one locally relevant newspaper was found). For the collection of newspaper content data we followed the research strategy and coding scheme

developed by Gerhards et al. (2007). In a first step, the digital archives of the selected newspapers were used to identify articles that reported on the fields of metropolitan policy-making (i.e. public transport and economic promotion) in the year 2010. The large sample of articles thus identified was then reduced via random selection to 200 articles for each metropolitan area (100 per policy field), weighted according to the proportion of articles published by each newspaper in the large sample. The content of these 1600 articles was coded by a team of student assistants, according to a standard procedure. Coding categories specified information on policy-actors that were mentioned at least once in an article, as well as public attributions of responsibilities, i.e. statements in which someone was made responsible by someone for a given policy, or was asked to (not) take action. Coding of public attributions of responsibility involved information on the sender, the addressee, as well as on the qualification (positive or negative) of a specific policy decision or outcome, or on an invitation to take action (cf. below).

Table 1: Summarizes the comparative framework and the number of newspaper articles selected from eight metropolitan areas.

	Switzerland		Germany		United Kingdom		France	
Metropolitan Area	Bern	Zürich	Berlin	Stuttgart	Birmingham	London	Paris	Lyon
Governance Type*	NR	MG	NR	MG	NR	MG	NR	MG
Policy Field	old/new	old/new	old/new	old/new	old/new	old/new	old/new	old/new
Nat. Media Sys.**	DC	DC	DC	DC	LIB	LIB	PP	PP
News Articles	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Nr. Of Newspapers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1

*NR=New Regionalism, MG=Metropolitan Government

**Media systems: DC=Democratic Corporatist, LIB=Liberal, PP=Polarized-Pluralist

3.3 Operationalization of variables

Oriented by the theoretical framework and hypothesis outlined above, the subsequent analysis aims explores the involvement of elected and non-elected actors in metropolitan policy-making, their visibility in media reports, as well as the extent to which they are publicly attributed responsibility for policy failures or success.

The distinction between elected and non-elected actors is operationalized according to their position in the democratic chain of delegation, i.e. the institutionalized mechanisms of sanctions based on electoral results. More precisely, we distinguish between elected and non-elected actors as well as a mixed category. The term “elected” is understood very broadly: the category 'elected actor' thus includes actors who are either directly elected by voters or accountable to an elected actor and therefore part of the democratic chain of delegation. Non-elected actors are those who are appointed to their position by other mechanisms than direct election, and who are not accountable to an elected actor. The mixed category represents collective actors (e.g. organisations or firms), in which both elected and non-elected actors exercise some form of control. Actors that do not fit any of these three categories are subsumed under others (e.g. parties, experts, citizens). (See appendix for details.)

Involvement in metropolitan policy-making is measured by an actor's participation in the decision-making processes examined in the detailed case studies (see appendix); 611 actors were thus identified. Visibility in media reports is measured on the basis of the mentions of an actor in the media articles (on the whole, 9062 different actors were mentioned at least once in the whole sample). Finally, 'accountability' measures the extent to which an actor is held accountable in the media, i.e. how often she/he is attributed responsibility for policy failure or success. Overall, 1812 attribution addressees were found in the media content analysis. Responsibility attributions are categorized as positive responsibility attributions (attpos), negative responsibility attributions (attneg) and competence attributions (attcomp) (see Box).

Box: the attribution of responsibility

The attribution of responsibility refers to a specific iterative argument in text or speech. The attribution of (political) responsibility implies a specific constellation among actors which is: An attribution sender (AS), who attributes accountability to another actor, the attribution addressee (AA), who is linked to a specific metropolitan policy subject (AG) - in this case public transport and locational policy. The attribution pattern basically implies the question: Who is held accountable by whom in respect to what? In the same way competence can be attributed. This is not about who is to blame or to praise, but who should be responsible to take action. It is the negotiation of competence for problem solution. The endorsement of competence implies responsibility, but differs from responsibility attributions because implied causality is potentially open. The analogical question therefore is: Who should take action to do what?

Gerhards et al. (2007) distinguish between attributions of success (positive) or failure (negative) and attributing responsibility for problem solutions, Having coded actors as attribution senders and

addresses, as well as the subjects of responsibility, coding the attribution character (positive or negative) completes one unit of analysis. The following sentences from coded newspaper articles serve as an illustration:

Positive attribution of responsibility by a journalist (sender) with the Mayor as the addressee:

"The Mayor's policy successfully contributed to the quality of local transport in our city."

Negative attribution of responsibility by the Mayor (sender) to the Parliament (addressee):

"The Mayor accused the Parliament of undermining his efforts to promote the local transport of the city by holding back money."

The second general distinction is between responsibility and competence attribution. Attributing responsibility for problem solution, a competence attribution, means that somebody should or should not be responsible for a given problem. The following example demonstrates such a competence attribution.

Competence attribution by a business man (sender) to Birmingham city politicians as the addressee:

"These sorts of things should not be subject to the whims and prejudices of politicians who are only there for the short term. It has to transcend that."

In this example a top business man *Mr. Pitchford* (taken from the article context) as the attribution sender, complains that competence on the city region planning ("*these sorts of things*", contextual interpretation) should not be in the hands of politicians. To disapprove competence, in terms of responsibility attribution, the attribution is to be coded as a negative competence attribution. In contrast, if somebody is considered to be capable to deal with policy situations, the competence attribution is identified as positive.

Inter-coder reliability of the content analysis was tested in paired language groups on the basis of percentage agreement. Percent agreements among coders were tested on two different levels; article variables and attributions. Reliability tests were held during different stages of the coding procedure in order to control for possible changes during adoption of the codebook and language bias. Reliability tests of article variables (such as size, medium, author, and article type etcetera) turned out to be strong (percent agreement 0.83.) as well as the end-reliability test of attributions where the coders scored an average agreement of 75%. The pairwise agreements in the language groups differed from 55% up to 95% agreement. However, with regards to the complexity of the coding schema and compared to Gerhards' study, reliability is considered to be acceptable although values ideally should be higher.

The following data analysis uses cross tables validated by Cramer's V. All results are significant (.000) and Cramer's V varies between 0.1 and 0.3.

4. Empirical Findings

The goal of this article is to assess the role of the media with respect to democratic accountability in network governance. We have seen that, from a normative point of view, the information function of the media in democratic societies can be assumed to result in the media accurately mirroring who is involved in metropolitan policy making and who is to be held accountable. We have contrasted this normative perspective with a media bias hypothesis, considering that due to media commercialization, media reporting on metropolitan policy-making will have an attention bias towards elected actors, and be replete with a negative tonality.

The results are presented in three steps. The analysis generally uses case study data on the actual involvement of different actor types in metropolitan policy-making to compare it to their media visibility and accountability as measured by the media content analysis. In a first step, we combine data from all metropolitan areas and both policy fields under scrutiny. On this basis, the analysis is then further differentiated. In a second step, we distinguish between the two dominant models of metropolitan governance (i.e. consolidated institutions/ metropolitan government - type I governance - versus new regionalism - type II governance), in order to see whether the characteristic feature of the institutional context at the metropolitan level makes any difference. Third, we look at media-system effects, by differentiating the cases according to the three media-system category according to Hallin and Mancini (2004).

4.1 Involvement, visibility and accountability of elected and non-elected actors

The first figure shows the share of different actor types' participation in policy processes in both policy fields across all eight metropolitan areas (involvement). Next to this, the visibility of actors in the media as well as their public accountability (addressee of attributions) is presented. Among the actor types, it can be seen that elected actors are by far the most important actor group across all three variables. Despite the new regionalist model followed by half of the metropolitan areas and, as a corollary, the expected involvement of many non-elected actors, elected actors represent more than 50% of all actors involved in metropolitan policy making processes. Moreover, elected actors are, unlike non-elected actors, politically accountable. Thus, the public accountability of elected actors is represented in the media in equal measure to their involvement, as we can see in the figure below (1). Despite the general lower media visibility of elected actors, in case of accountability responsibility is attributed to them. The second most involved actors are non-elected actors. Their role in metropolitan policy making processes is important, however, they are not institutionally

accountable to an electorate. Looking at figure 1 reveals that the media reflects the relevance of non-elected actors by making them the visible and thus attributable. Thus, we suggested in the theory section that non-elected actors might be less visible and less accountable in the media too. Figure 1 shows that this is not the case and that the importance of non-elected actors is generally represented in the media reality, at least in terms of media visibility. A possible explanation might be that non-elected actors are new to public accountability discourses; therefore they need more media visibility to become publically accountable. In contrast, elected actors are traditionally visible and daily figures in media reports. Moreover, since elected actors are politically accountable, their legitimacy does not depend on public accountability to the extent non-elected actors depend on it.

Figure 1: Actor types by involvement, visibility and accountability in %

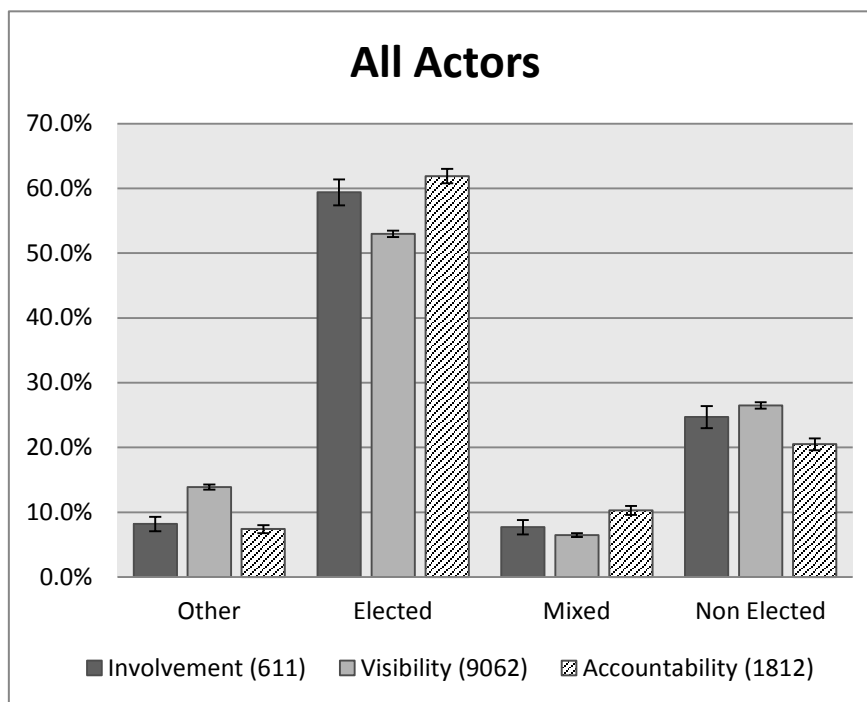


Table 2: Actor types by involvement, visibility and accountability in %

Actor Type	Involvement (611)	Visibility (9062)	Accountability (1812)	SE inv	SE Vis	SE Acc
Other	8.2%	13.90%	7.40%	1.1%	0.4%	0.6%
Elected	59.4%	53%	61.90%	2.0%	0.5%	1.1%
Mixed	7.7%	6.50%	10.30%	1.1%	0.3%	0.7%
Non Elected	24.7%	26.50%	20.50%	1.7%	0.5%	0.9%

Above we confirmed that the share of the different actor types in involvement, visibility and accountability fairly corresponds in the political and the media reality. The interesting step is now the discussion of differences between the frequencies within the variables involvement, media visibility and public accountability of the different actor types under consideration of the standard error. As

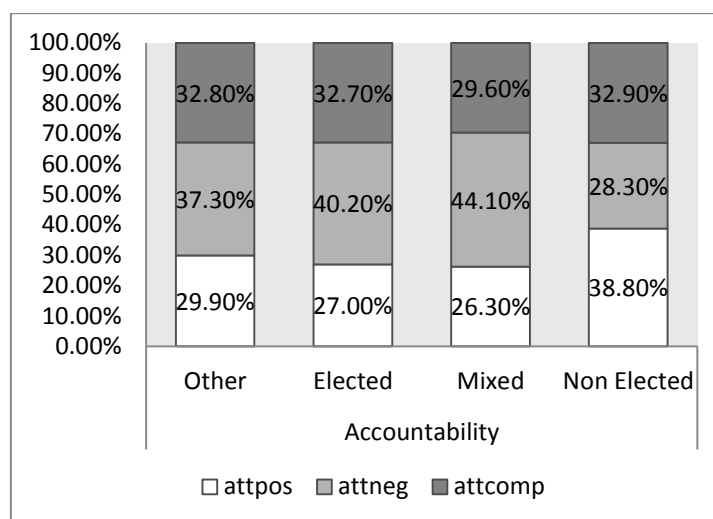
we suggested in the theory part, we defined public accountability to be more meaningful than media visibility with regard to the communicational dimension of legitimacy. Furthermore, elected and non-elected actors are in our focus.

Looking at the frequencies only, elected actors are much less visible than they are involved, but in the same time more publically accountable. It could be a first indicator that elected actors are more in the focus of public accountability than they are actually involved in policy processes. However, looking at the standard errors of involvement and accountability shows that a possible bias cannot be approved. The biggest difference between involvement and accountability seems to be in the group of non-elected actors. With regard to their involvement the trend seems to be reverse as non-elected actors are held less publically accountable. Moreover, looking at the the standard error of involvement and accountability leads to the conclusion that it is not a bias towards elected actors but maybe a bias towards a belittlement of the public accountability of non-elected actors.

The figure above showed that the media generally mirror who is involved in metropolitan policy making processes. With regard to our second assumptions, looking only at the frequencies supports the hypothesis that there might be a bias towards elected actors. But looking at the deviation between the three variables does not support this assumption.

Further, being held accountable in the media does not automatically mean that respective policy makers failed and are being blamed in the media. Being held accountable in public can also be affirmative for policy actors. Negative attributions blame the respective policy actor, whereas positive attributions confirm policy actors for their conduct. Figure 1b shows the extent of attribution characters, as explained in the methodology part, across all actor types.

Figure 1b: Accountability of actor types by attribution types in % (N=1812)



According to the content analysis method applied, attributing public responsibility or competence to other actors or to oneself seems to follow certain patterns (c.f. Gerhards et al. 2007). As expected, we found approximately one third of all attributions to be competence attributions (positive and negative), one third positive causal attributions and one third negative causal attributions. The most interesting attribution character is the negative ones. According to figure 1b, elected actors are more negatively held accountable in metropolitan news reporting than non-elected policy actors. Although the participation of non-elected actors in urban policy making cannot be sanctioned through political accountability, non-elected actors seems to be a lot less blamed in the media compared to elected actors. It seems that elected actors take more blame, because they politically accountable too. One explanation could be that non-elected actors are associated with being part of civil society. Usually civil society is evaluated more positively than political actors and receives less criticism. In contrast the media have a long lasting tradition in controlling politics. Therefore, independent from their real involvement in policy making, non-elected actors are judged more positively and getting blamed the least. It supports the suggestions above, that non-elected actors are less in the focus of public accountability although they are important in metropolitan policy making processes.

However, to strengthen our arguments, the next figure presents the data divided according to governance types. Type I refers to an institutionalized metropolitan government (MG), whereas Type II stands for network arranged governance or new regionalism (NR).

4.2 Governance types and public accountability

As explained in the theory section, the organization of governance arrangements in metropolitan areas implies the involvement of different types of policy actors. In institutionalized governance arrangements, theory suggests that elected actors are important players in policy making, whereas in network based governance mixed and non-elected actors take over the role of policy makers. By splitting the data collected according to the two governance types, we can analyse whether the trends described before are holding true.

First, we want to verify whether the media reflects the differences in metropolitan governance arrangements in terms of visibility and accountability of elected and non-elected actors. Looking at the shares of elected actors in metropolitan government and new regionalism reveals, as assumed, that the share of elected actors is higher in metropolitan governments (see figure 2). But whereas involvement and accountability of elected actors in metropolitan governments is almost equal, the public accountability of elected actors in new regionalism is considerably stronger with regard to their real involvement. Unfortunately, looking at the standard error in both governance types does not confirm the differences in the variable involvement and accountability.

Figure 2: Involvement, media visibility and public accountability of actor types by governance types

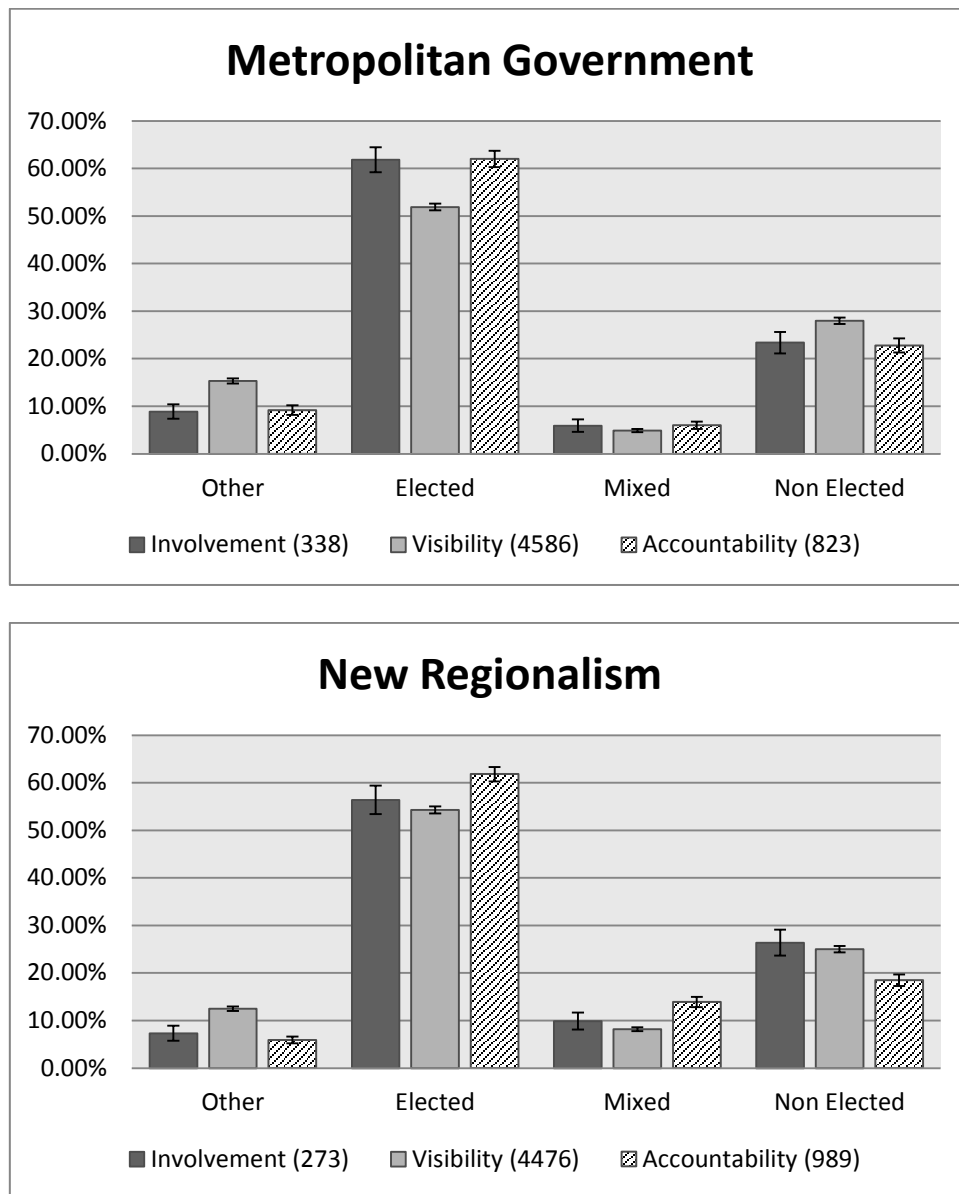


Table 3: Involvement, media visibility and public accountability of actor types by governance types

Metro. Gov.	Involvement (338)	Visibility (4586)	Accountability (823)	SE Inv	SE Vis	SE Acc
Other	8.88%	15.30%	9.20%	1.5%	0.5%	1.0%
Elected	61.83%	51.90%	62.00%	2.6%	0.7%	1.7%
Mixed	5.92%	4.90%	6.00%	1.3%	0.3%	0.8%
Non Elected	23.37%	28.00%	22.80%	2.3%	0.7%	1.5%
New Region.	Involvement (273)	Visibility (4476)	Accountability (989)	SE Inv	SE Vis	SE Acc
Other	7.33%	12.50%	5.90%	1.6%	0.5%	0.7%
Elected	56.41%	54.30%	61.80%	3.0%	0.7%	1.5%
Mixed	9.89%	8.20%	13.90%	1.8%	0.4%	1.1%
Non Elected	26.37%	25.00%	18.50%	2.7%	0.7%	1.2%

As the variable involvement suggests, non-elected actors in metropolitan policy making processes of new regionalism are slightly more important than in metropolitan governments. Metropolitan areas where new regionalism predominates naturally have a bigger share of mixed actors. A similar pattern as in metropolitan governments holds true: the involvement and public accountability of non-elected actors is almost equal in metropolitan governments, whereas the difference in new regionalism is much stronger. Here, standard error allows the conclusion, that there is actually a slight bias towards a negligence of non-elected actors regarding their public accountability. In other words, we can say that although elected actors are not particularly more targeted in the media than they are actually involved, the media tends to reinforce the lack of accountability of non-elected actors especially in new regionalism.

Looking at both types of governance in detail revealed that differences in shares of actor types are actually represented in the media discourse. This is in support of our first hypothesis, which assumes that the media mirror who is involved in local politics. Our second hypothesis, that there is a bias towards elected actors, has to be inverted. The presented data rather suggest inattention towards non-elected actor's public accountability and thus reinforces their lack of institutional accountability.

To further test if those differences prove their value when looking at different types of media systems is discussed in the next chapter.

4.3 Media systems and public accountability

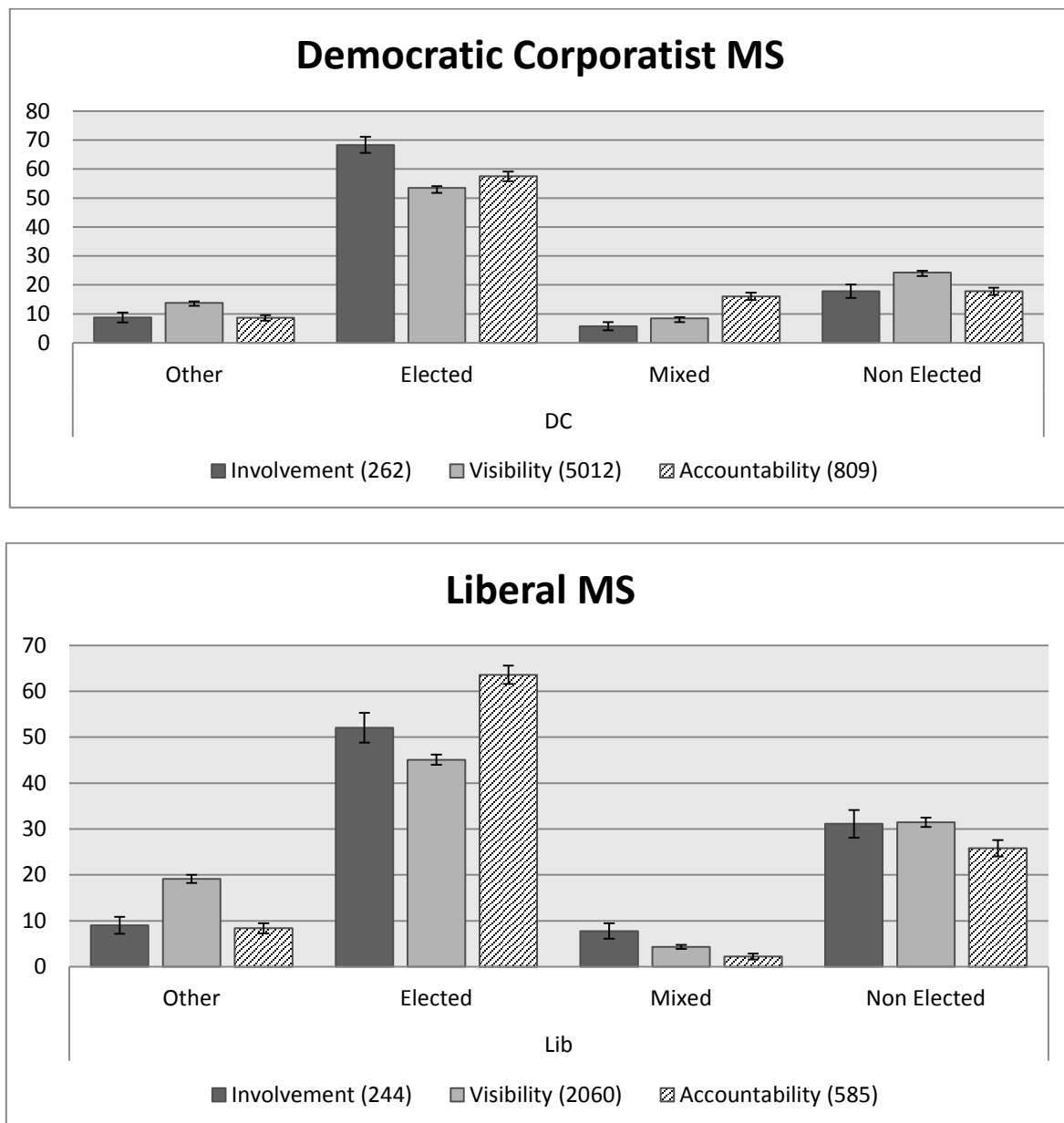
Now we turn to our control variable that is represented by types of media systems (cf. Hallin and Mancini 2004). As suggested in the theory section, we expect, due to media commercialism, a stronger bias towards elected actors in the liberal media system. However, since the media system typology has been a target of criticism, we look not only at the liberal media system but at all three media systems to learn about other potential differences among the types. Thus, if there is a bias, we expect it to be the strongest in the liberal media system. Furthermore, we now also look whether the reversed bias towards non-elected actor exists.

The next figure (3) shows the different shares of actor's involvement, media visibility and public accountability across the three media systems. As expected, the general pattern remains: elected actors are the most dominant and non-elected the second most dominant actors in metropolitan policy making processes. However, in this section we are less interested in the differences between elected and non-elected actors as represented by different media systems, but more focused on a possible media bias (difference between involvement and public accountability).

Looking at elected actors reveals the biggest difference in the involvement and public accountability to be in the Polarized Pluralist media system. It means that elected actors are held more accountable

than they are actually involved in local politics. Moreover, it is also in the Polarized Pluralist media system, where non-elected actors are held much less accountable than they actually are involved. Unfortunately standard errors are also the highest with regard to involvement and accountability in the Polarized Pluralist type. Both trends exist also in the Liberal media system but to a lower extent. Interestingly it is in the Democratic Corporatist media system where elected actors are held less accountable in public compared to their actual involvement. Additionally, in the Democratic Corporatist system the public accountability of non-elected actors corresponds to their real involvement.

Figure 3: Involvement, media visibility and public accountability of actor types by media systems



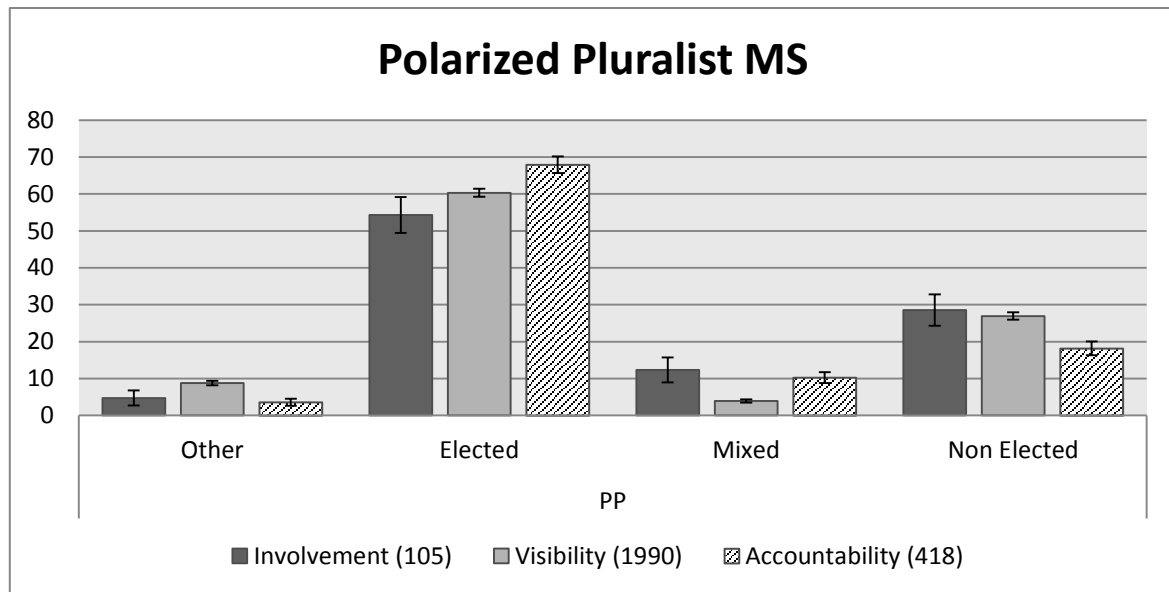


Table 4: Involvement, media visibility and public accountability of actor types by media systems

DC	Involvement (262)	Visibility (5012)	Accountability (809)	SE Inv	SE Vis	SE Acc
Other	8.78	13.8	8.7	1.7	.5	1.0
Elected	68.32	53.4	57.5	2.7	.7	1.6
Mixed	5.72	8.5	16.1	1.4	.4	1.3
Non Elected	17.81	24.3	17.8	2.3	.6	1.2
Lib	Involvement (244)	Visibility (2060)	Accountability (585)	SE Inv	SE Vis	SE Acc
Other	9.02	19.1	8.4	1.9	.9	1.1
Elected	52.05	45.1	63.6	3.2	1.1	2.0
Mixed	7.79	4.3	2.2	1.7	.4	.6
Non Elected	31.14	31.5	25.8	3.0	1.0	1.8
PP	Involvement (105)	Visibility (1990)	Accountability (418)	SE Inv	SE Vis	SE Acc
Other	4.76	8.8	3.6	2.0	.6	.9
Elected	54.29	60.3	67.9	4.8	1.1	2.3
Mixed	12.38	4.0	10.3	3.4	.4	1.5
Non Elected	28.57	26.9	18.2	4.3	1.0	1.9

In the theory part we suggested that the media of the Liberal media system are stronger biased towards elected actors compared to the other two models. Since media commercialism is expected to be the highest in the Liberal media system, the media is assumed to focus more on the newsworthy elected actors than non-elected actors. However, our dataset does not provide evidence for this hypothesis. Strong political parallelism, as given in the Polarized Pluralist media system, could also be an explanation for the bias there. In contrast we identified another possible bias. In the case of the Liberal and the Polarized Pluralist media systems, non-elected actors seem to be more in favour of the media and are thus held less accountable than their involvement suggests.

5. Conclusions

Democratic multilevel governance, whether it is institutionalized or network based, requires that the media portray and represent the complexity of policy actors. It allows that those actors can be controlled and be potential subject to public accountability. “Accountability as a virtue is important, because it provides legitimacy to public officials and public organizations” (Bovens 2010: 954). In line with our operationalization, public accountability is important because it is a source of legitimacy that can be measured. Just as Bovens, who distinguishes in his analysis of democratic accountability between politicians and civil servants, we also looked at non-elected actors. Whereas politicians have to behave responsive towards parliaments, the media and to respective stakeholders, civil servants refrain from the public and remain loyal to their principal. Similarly, the lack of political accountability of non-elected actors jeopardizes their legitimacy. The duty of politicians to be publically accountable seems to be traditionally stronger than for civil servants or non-elected actors. But in complex multilevel arrangements like within new forms of regionalism, the dichotomy between politicians and civil servant seems not to be appropriate anymore. Thus, our approach to also look at the communicational legitimacy of non-elected actors helped to fill a research gap. Moreover, looking at our data, it turned out that the media can keep up with the complexity of multilevel politics to a quite surprising extent.

Analysing involved policy actors across metropolitan regions in detail and comparing their visibility in the news with their public accountability warrants to conclude that the media show a quite nuanced picture of who is involved and who is to be held accountable. The case study and media content data provided for all cases support our rather optimistic assumption that the media mirror who is involved. However, the data also show that non-elected actors are held less accountable compared to their visibility and their real importance in public policy making. Against our assumption that the media might focus more on elected actors in public, the analysis revealed a revers trend in accountability discourses. Additionally, non-elected actors are the ones who receive the smallest amount of negative attributions (blame) when looking at different attribution types. Moreover, they are evaluated more positively then others. Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind that standard errors are only in favour of a bias towards a disregard of public accountability of non-elected actors.

Furthermore, due to a stronger involvement of non-elected actors, the lack of democratic accountability is assumed to be higher in new regionalism (type II). The legitimacy of metropolitan governments (type I) benefits from the political accountability and public accountability of elected actors despite the high involvement of non-elected actors. However, looking at the public accountability of non-elected actors suggest that their lack of institutional legitimacy is rather reinforced than compensated in the media. Regarding our hypothesis of media commercialisation,

we could not identify a bias towards elected actor's public accountability which is strengthened by the Liberal media system. In contrast, the strongest difference between involvement and public accountability was found in the Polarized Pluralist media system. A possible explanation could be the strong political parallelism that is characteristic for these media systems.

Taken together, the data presented implies a rather mixed image of public accountability, which is also shown by low Cramèr's V and high standard errors. Some of the data tends to show evidence that media system effects are overestimated. Different journalist or media traditions within these metropolitan regions could bias our picture of the communicational dimension of legitimacy. Unfortunately, we cannot discuss those dimensions in the scope of this analysis.

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7. Methodological Appendix

A) Actors categories

Elected versus Non-Elected	Subcategory	Decision Rule for coding	Examples
Elected Actors	Directly Elected Actors	Actors that consist solely of directly elected representatives.	Parliaments, Mayors, Presidents
	Indirectly Elected Actors	Actors that consist of representatives that are part of the chain of delegation.	Prime Minister, administration, public agencies
Mixed	Semi-Elected Actors	Collective actors that consist at least of one directly or indirectly elected actor, but also of non-elected actors.	Public agencies, public private partnerships
Non-Elected Actors	Profit oriented Interest Groups	Actor pursues self-oriented goals on behalf of its members or clients.	Unions, chamber of commerce, business associations, Private economy
	Non-profit groups/ Social Movements	Actor aims at increasing common goods for society.	Environmental groups, Social Organizations
Others Non-Elected Actors with specific functional / accountability logic/ Electorate	Political Parties	Partisan group that aims at running for office.	Any political party
	Media	Actor reports on policy processes.	Journalists, Newspapers, Broadcasting
	Experts	Network participation is based on consultation of the actor's expertise. Actor does not have a policy preference.	Judges, Courts, Legal Experts, University working groups
	Citizens	Unorganized groups of citizens that are not part of any of the other actor categories.	Individuals, voters, neighborhoods, passengers, clients, etc.

B) List of newspaper selection

Metro Area	Newspaper	Metro Area	Newspaper
Bern	Bund	London	The Guardian
Bern	B.Z.	London	The Independent
Bern	20 Minuten (Bern)	London	Evening Standard, London
Zürich	Tagesanzeiger	Birmingham	Birmingham Ev. Mail
Zürich	Zürichsee-Zeitung	Birmingham	Birmingham Post
Zürich	20 Minuten (Zürich)	Birmingham	Solihull News (weekly)
Berlin	Berliner Morgenpost	Paris	Le Parisien

Berlin	Berliner Zeitung	Paris	Le Figaro
Berlin	Märkische Allgemeine (MAZ)	Paris	La Croix
Stuttgart	Stuttgarter Zeitung	Lyon	Le Progrès
Stuttgart	Stuttgarter Nachrichten		
Stuttgart	Nürtinger Zeitung		

C) Case studies

Table D1: Analyzed transport planning in the eight metropolitan areas

Metropolitan Area	Political Process
Zürich	Rahmenkredit ZVV 2012-2013
Bern	Angebotskonzept 2010–2013, Regionale Verkehrskonferenz Bern-Mittelland
Berlin	Local Transport Plan Berlin 2006-2009, (Local Transport Plan Brandenburg, Contract with S-Bahn)
Stuttgart	Regional Transport Plan, 2001
London	Mayor's Transport Strategy 2008
Birmingham	Local Transport Plan 2006
Paris	Le Plan de Déplacements Urbains d'Ile de France (2000, 2011)
Lyon	Le Plan de Déplacements Urbains, revision 2005

Table D2: Analyzed locational promotion processes in the eight metropolitan areas

Metropolitan Area	Political Process
Zürich	Setup of the Greater Zurich Area 1998
Bern	Setup of the Wirtschaftsraum Bern, March 2011
Berlin	Setup of the Capital Region as a joint campaign for location promotion 2006
Stuttgart	Setup of Wirtschaftsförderung Region Stuttgart 1995
London	London Development Strategy 2010
Birmingham	Setup of Regional Development Agency (Advantage West Midlands) 1998
Paris	Setup of L'Agence de Développement 2001
Lyon	Setup of Only Lyon 2007